

fact sheet

Ten key facts about child injury in Australia

1. From 1979 to 1998 **9,072** Australian children (aged 0-14 years) were **killed** and **60,707 hospitalised** by unintentional injuries – the kind often referred to as ‘accidents’. Many of these can be easily prevented by simple means.

2. **Injuries are the leading cause of death** in Australian children aged one to fourteen, accounting for nearly half of all deaths in this age group. More children die of injury than die of cancer, asthma and infectious diseases combined.

3. After respiratory illnesses like asthma, injuries are the **second leading cause of child hospitalisation**.

4. **Child injuries cost** the nation an estimated **1.5 billion** dollars annually.



5. **Unintentional injuries** make up around **90% of all child injury deaths**, compared to 10% for intentional injuries from abuse, violence, suicide and neglect.

6. **Child injury deaths** have been **halved since 1979**, from about two a day to one per day. While good progress has been made, Kidsafe estimates **a further 80 deaths and 20,000 hospitalisations could be prevented** annually by implementing known safety countermeasures.



7. **Young children** under the age of five years are **most at risk** of unintentional injury, and account for around half of all child injury deaths.

8. **Child deaths** from unintentional injury are most commonly the result of:

- **car crashes**
- **drowning**, in particular young children killed in home pools
- **house fires**

Together these four causes account for **79% of all child injury deaths**.

9. **Hospitalisation of young children**, from unintentional injury is most commonly the result of:

- **falls**, e.g. from nursery equipment, in the backyard or from playground equipment.
- **poisoning**, e.g. from medicines and household cleaners
- **scalds**, e.g. from hot drinks and hot tap water
- **choking**
- **dog bites**.
- **cutting and piercing injuries**, e.g. cuts sustained by children falling through plate glass
- **car passenger injuries**
- **pedestrian injuries**.

9. **The most common place** for young children to be injured is **in their own home**. As children get older, injuries in community settings such as playgrounds, sports fields, at school and on our roads become more common. Ensuring **the safety of our homes, roads and communities is paramount** for keeping children safe.



child safety is no accident

Six home features that help keep kids safe

How safe are our homes?

Three out of four serious injuries to young children occur in the place you'd think they'd be safest – their own home.

Try checking your home against the following list of home safety features:

1. Pools (and spas) that are fully fenced, with well maintained, self-closing gates.

Why?

Young children drown quickly and silently. During 2002 – 2003 in Australia 17 children under five drowned in unfenced pool or pools with poorly maintained fences or gates.

2. Hot water from bathroom taps set at a delivery temperature of 50°.

Why?

Hot water burns like fire. Many Australian homes have hot water coming from their taps at temperature that can burn a child's skin in one second.

3. Barriers such as stairs and fireguards in place to keep children away from hazards.

Why?

Falls down stairs and steps are common and because young children are 'top heavy', head injuries can often occur. Babies and toddlers don't understand "hot". They are attracted to bright colours – like the flames of a fire – and may touch hot surfaces while simply exploring their world.

4. Child resistant catches fitted to cupboards where dangers like medicines, cleaners, matches and lighters are stored.

Why?

Young children are curious and don't understand danger. Telling them "not to touch" is not enough to keep them safe. Dangerous products need to be stored away safely.

5. Smoke alarms installed with Fire Brigade advice and checked regularly.

Why?

House fires continue to claim Australian lives every year. Young children are at risk as they need adults to rescue them in time. Smoke alarms provide a warning that may be critical to survival.



6. Play areas fenced off from the street and the driveway.

Why?

Cars and kids don't mix. Young children have no fear of cars and are not easily seen by drivers.

Kidsafe estimates that if these six features were in place in all Australian homes, they would help prevent more than half of all home injury deaths among children under five and thousands of children from the trauma of a hospital visit.

Families wanting more information on making their home safer for children can contact KidSafe SA on **8161 6318**.

A Parents Guide to Kidsafe Homes is available from Kidsafe Centres at a small cost.



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For more information:

☎ (08) 8161 6318

Poisons Information Centre

☎ 13 11 26

www.kidsafe.com.au